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ABSTRACT

An exploration of interpersonal justice suggests some connections among relative deprivation theory, justice theory, and depression research. Distinctions between home life and work life are necessary in thinking about fairness, deservingness, and deprivation. A survey of over 400 adults explored the extent to which men and women feel deprived about their jobs and home lives and the extent to which they think they are not receiving what they deserve at work and at home. An examination was made of two special subgroups from this survey: 31 employed men and 31 employed women, all married, childless, and with high status jobs. Both men and women felt less deprivation about their home lives than about their work lives. Both men and women felt that the discrepancy between what they deserve to receive and what they actually are receiving is smaller at home than at work. Results suggest gender is a less important variable than the work-home difference. (NRB)

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Deprivation & Deservingness

Distributive Justice at Home and at Work

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Abstract

The present paper represents an exploratory probe into the area of interpersonal justice. It outlines three related areas -- relative deprivation theory, justice theory, and depression research -- and suggests some connections among them. Descriptive findings from a survey project are presented as tentative support for the idea that one ought to distinguish between home life and work life in thinking about fairness, deservingness, and deprivation.

In a panel on justice, it seems only just to start by admitting the very tentative nature of some of what follows. That I am unabashed in my groping ought, probably, to be attributed to the fact that I am still in the first enthusiastic flush of discovery. The discovery is not one of new territories. Rather, it concerns the cutting of paths between three well tended, highly cultivated gardens. Let me give the contours of each first and suggest the linking paths.

Relative deprivation

The first area is relative deprivation theory. At the core of the theory is the proposition that our feelings of deprivation and gratification, or more generally our feelings of satisfaction with some situation, are not simply a function of the objective characteristics of the situation. More specifically, people feel aggrieved with their outcomes when and only when certain psychological preconditions are fulfilled. Various theorists differ in what they postulate to be the crucial preconditions. In its most engorged state, the theory states that people feel aggrieved about their failure to have some outcome (X) when they: 1) want X; 2) feel they deserve X; 3) see some other or others who have X; 4) used to think it possible to attain X; 5) think it will no longer be possible to attain X; and 6) do not blame themselves for their failure to possess X.

Recent attempts to test the hypothesized preconditions of felt deprivation (e.g., Crosby & Bernstein, note 1) have shown that two preconditions are especially important. These are feelings

of deservingness and comparison other. Some data also suggest that deprivation is felt when things go wrong within contexts that are under human control. Aversive events which are in the province of the gods seem not to elicit deprivation and resentment but rather to result in other negative emotions like mourning or depression.

Principles of justice

The second garden of ideas is interpersonal justice in general and Morton Deutsch's (1975) reflections on the principles of distributive justice, in particular. According to Deutsch, a sense of injustice may be directed at values, at the rules which implement the values, at the implementation of accepted rules, or at the procedure by which rules are determined. Deutsch goes on to distinguish three value bases for the distribution of rewards and to identify their determinants within the context of cooperative relationships. He proposes that equity is the dominant principle of distributive justice in relations centering around economic productivity; that equality is the dominant principle in relationships emphasizing socio-emotional well being; and that need is the dominant principle in relationships which revolve around growth and development.

Deutsch's distinctions help me to sharpen my thinking about relative deprivation theory. Relative deprivation theorists have traditionally distinguished between personal (or egoistical) deprivation, on the one hand, and group or fraternal deprivation, on the other (Pettigrew, 1967). Runciman (1966) has also differentiated between the domains of power, money, and status. But no one has seriously considered the importance of interpersonal

contexts for the processes of relative deprivation. After reading Deutsch's article and other pieces in the same issue of The Journal of Social Issues (Lerner, 1975), it occured to me that deprivation or resentment might be more pronounced in the workplace, where both the values and the rules are comparatively clear cut, than in the home, where values may be in flux (cf., Chodorow, 1978; Shorter, 1975) and where the rules for enacting values are imprecise and elastic. The quantification of life in the workplace tends to facilitate the computation of distributive justice. But what metric can be used at home? Even if one settles on the proper justice principle (say, equality rather than equity), how is one to keep the tally?

Depression Research

The third area of interest concerns gender differences in depression. That depression is primarily a female malady is all too solidly documented. Weissman & Klerman (1977) for example, review over forty studies which show that women are depressed 2 and 6 times as frequently as are men. While some psychologists (e.g., Lewis, 1976) stress the possible physiological basis of the gender difference, others (e.g., Bart, 1972; Chesler, 1972) emphasize the importance of social roles. Some empirical studies have shown that housewives are more severly depressed than are women in the paid labor force. (Mostow & Newberry, 1975; Weissman & Paykel, 1974).

Where is the connecting footpath? It occured to me that one reason why housewives are more depressed than working people is that their primary labor has an elastic metric. When things are going well in the home, being a housewife might be as enjoyable as

any other type of labor. But when things go awry it is difficult indeed to feel deprived. Here then is the role ambiguity theory of housewife depression with a new twist. I do not think the role demands of housework and wifehood are ambiguous in and of themselves. But it seems reasonable to think that the rewards of the task are so qualitative and so resistant to quantification that it is sometimes difficult for a woman to decide if the outcomes are what they ought to be. The same, it seems, applies to men, but house-husbands are still scarce enough to keep the gender ratio in depression favorable to males.

With these considerations in mind, I have begun to root around in some recent survey data. The analyses are exploratory. They describe the extent to which men and women feel deprived about their jobs and their home lives and the extent to which men and women think they are not receiving what they deserve at home and at work. They also describe home and work differences concerning a couple of other variables related to felt deprivation.

I have approached the data with two hunches. First, when occupational status (e.g., employed, at home) and job status (high, low) are controlled, gender differences ought not to be evident. Secondly, it seems likely that the scores on work related items will differ from scores on home related ones.

Method

Overview

A survey was recently conducted in a suburb of Boston. It forms the center piece in a study which aims to document the effect of employment on women and to test some theories of relative deprivation. In this paper, a small portion of the

data are presented. Two types of analyses are done here. First, frequency distributions from the complete sample on three separate items are given. Second, scores on five variables (each of which is constructed from a number of items) are given for two sub-groups in the sample: high status married employed men and high status married employed women.

Sample

The total sample included over 400 residents of a Boston suburb. All of the respondents were white and between the ages of 25 and 40. They were selected from published listings of town residents using a hybrid sampling technique. Basically, we used stratified random sampling, tinged with some quota sampling techniques. The general sample contained three subgroups: employed men, employed women, and housewives. All groups were divided, on the basis of their own or their husbands' occupations, into high status and low status. The two employed samples were also divided into three family categories: single (unmarried); married (intact marriage, no children); and parent (intact marriage, children). All of the housewives were in the parent category.

The two special samples examined here are: 31 employed men with high status jobs who are married but have no children and 31 employed women with high status jobs who are married but have no children. Typical occupations in both groups are physician, lawyer, and psychologist. All respondents in the two groups have occupations with a rank of 60 or higher on the National Opinion Research Center prestige ratings (Davis, 1976).

Interview schedule

The interview schedule contained a series of questions intended to be operational measures of the hypothesized preconditions of deprivation and of the deprivation outcome. We distinguished among three types of deprivation: resentments concerning one's own job; resentments concerning one's own home life and resentments concerning the situation of women in America. The schedule also included Radloff's (1975) depression scale. Housewives were asked all questions relating to home life and to women in general. The employed samples were asked about all three areas. Most of the questions relating to home life were not asked of the single employed men and women.

Data from six questions were analyzed without respect to gender. Two questions concerned the use of comparison others, two concerned control, and two concerned the target of anger. The exact wording of the questions is found in Table 1.

The five variables which were analyzed for the two special groups were: a) feelings of deservingness concerning one's job (Job-D); b) feelings of deprivation concerning one's job (Job-RD); c) feelings of deservingness concerning one's home life (Home-D); d) feelings of deprivation concerning one's home life (Home-RD); and e) feelings of depression. For each variable, there were between three and 20 items which averaged into a combined score. A copy of the questions is included in an appendix. The potential and actual ranges of scores may be seen in Table 2.

Results

Frequency distributions

Table 1 shows the number of respondents who use a comparison other at work and at home. Comparing oneself to others is far more frequent at work than at home. Nearly 80% of the respondents answered in the affirmative (yes, do compare) concerning comparisons at work, while only about 50% of the respondents answered in the affirmative concerning home.

Insert Table 1

Table 1 also shows that the distributions of answers for the question concerning control were almost identical for the two cases of work and home. The distribution of answers to the question of target of one's anger were also nearly identical.

Sub-Group Comparison

The ranges and the means of scores for men and women on each of the five variables are presented in Table 2. As the table shows, there are virtually no gender differences. In table 3, the potential

Insert Table 2

ranges for each question are standardized. Table 3 shows in high relief what is suggested in Table 2: the home-work dichotomy is

Insert Table 3

important while the male-female dichotomy is not. Both men and women feel less deprivation about the way things are going in their home lives than about their work lives. Both men and women, furthermore, feel that the discrepancy between what they deserve to receive and what they are actually receiving is smaller at home than at work.

Discussion

It appears from the results that my hunches were generally correct. The subgroup comparisons showed that gender was less important than the work-home difference. The frequency counts showed that for comparison other, one of the hypothesized preconditions of felt deprivation, the home-work differentiation was great, although it did not make much difference for the issues of control and target.

These findings do not, of course, seal the case. They are but the first excursions into the area of the contextual nature of justice and deprivation. Further work on these issues is planned using as yet unanalyzed data from the Boston suburb survey. One line of inquiry is to look at the distribution of scores in other sub-groups. In the present paper, I have focused on data from the two most favored groups. Will gender difference emerge in the parent categories? Will they emerge in the low status groups? How about housewives? Will they feel more or less deprived concerning their home lives than do the high status working women? Another avenue of investigation is to see how the relationship between deservingness and felt deprivation compares to the relationships between any of the other hypothesized preconditions (e.g., past expectations) and felt deprivation.

The connection between deservingness, anger, and fairness deserves, I think, to be investigated in a number of ways that go far beyond the scope of my data. We should study not only the extent to which people feel unfairly treated at work and at home but also the very ways in which they think about fairness in the two contexts. One might, for example, follow the question: "are you getting the things you deserve on your job?" with the question: "how do you know?" or "how easy is it for you to judge this?" and repeat the sequence for home life.

We should also, I think, look seriously at the connection between justice and depression. People strive for justice and confusions about the values or the rules are likely to be disorienting. As a potential aide to navigating this uncharted territory I offer the following proposition: knowing that you are not obtaining what you deserve makes you angry, but not knowing whether you are or are not obtaining what you deserve can be, literally, depressing.

Reference Note

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Table 1:

Frequency distributions

COMPARISON OTHER

WORK

In trying to decide how good your own job is, do you ever compare yourself with anyone else?

Yes	271	74.44 %
No	68	20.06
	339	

HOME

When thinking about the amount of work you do around the house, do you ever compare your situation with that of anyone else?

209	51.99 %
193	4801
402	

CONTROL

WORK

When something does go wrong at work, no matter who is to blame, is it generally within your control to fix things?

		%
almost always within my control	98	28.49
sometimes within my control	195	56.69
rarely within my control	30	8.72
usually beyond my control	16	4.65
almost always beyond my control	5	1.45
	344	

HOME

When something goes wrong in your home-life, no matter whose fault it is, is it generally within your control to fix things?

	%
104	36.75
169	59.72
3	0.11
5	1.77
2	0.71
283	

TARGET

WORK

When you think of things that are wrong with your job, do you get angry, resentful, or bitter toward anyone in particular or do you get mad at things in general?

		%
It's always things in general	20	5.93
usually things in general	90	26.71
half and half	118	35.01
usually someone or some people	97	28.78
always someone or some people	12	3.56
	337	

HOME

When things go wrong at home, do you get angry, resentful, or bitter toward anyone in particular or do you get mad at things in general?

	%
11	3.93
72	25.71
110	39.28
82	29.29
5	1.79
280	

Table 2: Sub-Sample Scores

		Wm (n= 31)	Men (n= 31)
WORK RD		potential range = 1 to 5.8	
	range	1.62 - 4.00	1.46 - 3.77
	mean	2.88	2.61
Work deserve		potential range = 1 to 4.9	
	range	1.88 - 3.50	1.71 - 3.00
	mean	2.51	2.28
Home RD		potential range = 1 to 4.6	
	range	1.1 - 4.67	1.1 - 2.62
	mean	1.82	1.63
Home deserve		potential range = 0.67 to 8.3	
	range	0.67 - 4.67	0.67 - 3.00
	mean	1.68	1.43
Depression		potential range = 1 to 4	
	range	1.00 - 2.2	1.00 - 2.50
	mean	1.36	1.40

Table 3:

Standarized Mean Scores

	Women	Men
Work RD	4.26	3.86
Home RD	3.42	3.06

	Women	Men
Work deserve	4.42	4.01
Home deserve	2.01	1.76

Appendices:

Operational Measures
of theoretical variables

17. Within the last year, how often have you felt that work is a gratifying experience? (READ LIST.)

Almost never or never 1
Only once or twice 2
About once a month 3
About once a week 4
A couple of times a week 5
Every day 6
Almost all the time 7

ASK THIS QUESTION FOR EACH AREA (a - d) LISTED BELOW.

42. Frustrating incidents happen more or less frequently in people's jobs. Please tell me how often you feel angry, frustrated or bitter about the way things go at work. Think about things involving: (READ EACH AREA.)

How often:	a) Your Own Immediate Work Group		b) Your Organization		c) Outside Organizations or Individuals
	AREA		AREA		AREA
At least 2-3 times a day 1	1	14/	1	15/	1
Once a day 2	2		2		2
At least 2-3 times a week. 3	3		3		3
Once a week 4	4		4		4
At least 2-3 times a month 5	5		5		5
Once a month 6	6		6		6
At least 2-3 times a year 7	7		7		7
Once a year or less 8	8		8		8
(DOES NOT APPLY) 9	9		9		9

43. Within this last year, how often have you felt some sense of grievance concerning each of these aspects of your job: (READ EACH LISTED ASPECT)

Aspect	Always	Frequently	Occa-sionally	Seldom	Never	(DOES NOT APPLY)
Pay and fringe benefits	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number of hours . . .	1	2	3	4	5	6
Chances for advancement	1	2	3	4	5	6
Challenge	1	2	3	4	5	6
Respect and prestige.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Job security.	1	2	3	4	5	6
General working conditions	1	2	3	4	5	6

45. Within the last month, how often has your boss let you down?

Very frequently 1
Fairly often 2
Sometimes 3
Hardly ever 4
Never 5

46a. How about your co-workers? Within the last month have any co-workers let you down?

Very frequently 1
Fairly often 2
Sometimes 3
Hardly ever 4
Never 5
Doesn't apply
I work alone. 6

24. In view of your training and abilities, is your present job as good as it ought to be? (READ LIST)

Definitely 1
Probably 2
I'm not sure 3
Probably not 4
Definitely not 5

HAND CARD C

25. Would you say that your pay and fringe benefits are (READ LIST):

Better than you deserve 1
What you deserve 2
Slightly less than you deserve . . . 3
Much less than you deserve 4

ASK THIS QUESTION FOR EACH LISTED ASPECT.

26. How about these other aspects of your job? Which statement on this card best describes your (ASPECT)?

Aspect	Better Than I Deserve	What I Deserve	Slightly Less Than I Deserve	Much Less Than I Deserve	(DOES NOT APPLY)
Number of hours	1	2	3	4	5
Chances for advancement . .	1	2	3	4	5
Challenge	1	2	3	4	5
Respect and prestige. . . .	1	2	3	4	5
Job security.	1	2	3	4	5
General working conditions.	1	2	3	4	5

HOME - RD

80. Within the last year, how often have you felt really good about the way things are going at home? (READ LIST)

Almost never or never.	1
Only once or twice	2
About once a month	3
About once a week.	4
Every day.	5
Almost all the time.	6

83. Frustrating incidents happen more or less frequently in the course of family life. How many times within the last week did something happen which made you feel angry, resentful, or bothered? Please think about things which have to do with (ASPECT)

Aspect	Rarely	Sometimes	Occasionally	Most of the Time	Does Not Apply
Work inside the house (e.g. cleaning)	1	2	3	4	5
Work outside the house (e.g. shopping)	1	2	3	4	5
Dealings with service people (e.g. repairmen).	1	2	3	4	5
Financial issues. . . .	1	2	3	4	5
IF RESPONDENT LIVES ALONE, SKIP TO Q. 84					
Relations with spouse	1	2	3	4	5
Relations with other family members	1	2	3	4	5

97. Within the last year, how often have you felt resentful about the amount of housework that you have had to do? (READ LIST)

Most of the time	1
Very frequently	2
Fairly often	3
Sometimes	4
Rarely	5
Never	6

118. Within the last month, how often has your spouse let you down?

Very frequently	1
Fairly often	2
Sometimes	3
Hardly ever	4
Never	5

119. How about others in your household (parents, children, etc.)?

Very frequently	1
Fairly often	2
Sometimes	3
Hardly ever	4
Never	5
No one else in household	6

NB: 90 was used for scoring, but 89 was not.

89. Here is a list of chores. Please tell me each chore that you now do but dislike doing. (RECORD ALL THAT APPLY IN COL. Q. 89 BELOW).

IF RESPONDENT LIVES ALONE, SKIP TO Q. 92

90. Now, please look at all the chores on this list again, and tell me each chore where you do more than your fair share, that is, where you do the chore more ofter than you should. (RECORD ALL THAT APPLY IN COL. Q. 90 BELOW).

		Column Q. 89 Do and Dislike	Column Q. 90 Do Too Much
1.	Shop for food	1 28/	1
2.	Shop for clothing	1 29/	1
3.	Everyday cooking	1 30/	1
4.	Special cooking	1 31/	1
5.	Dishwashing	1 32/	1
6.	Empty garbage	1 33/	1
7.	Laundry	1 34/	1
8.	Wash windows	1 35/	1
9.	Straighten up	1 36/	1
10.	Clean floors	1 37/	1
11.	Make beds	1 38/	1
12.	Budget	1 39/	1
13.	Pay bills	1 40/	1
14.	Minor repairs	1 41/	1
15.	Major repairs	1 42/	1
16.	Wash car	1 43/	1
17.	Cut lawn	1 44/	1
18.	Take care of pets	1 45/	1

91. Taking all things into account, would you say that you do more or less work around the house than you deserve to do? (READ LIST)

Much more. 1
Little more. 2
Don't know 3
Little less. 4
Much less. 5
About right. 6

92. Does housework take more time than it ought? (IF NO, SKIP TO Q. 94.)

Yes. 1
No 2

DEPRESSION

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122. Now, below is a list of ways you might have felt or behaved. Please record how often you have felt this way during the past week, by circling the number of days you felt each of the following ways:

During the past week	Rarely (less than 1 day)	Some (1 - 2 days)	Occasionally (3 - 4 days)	Most of the Time (5 - 7 days)	
1. I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me.	1	2	3	4	25/
2. I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.	1	2	3	4	26/
3. I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help from my family or friends.	1	2	3	4	27/
4. I felt that I was just as good as other people.	1	2	3	4	28/
5. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.	1	2	3	4	29/
6. I felt depressed.	1	2	3	4	30/
7. I felt that everything I did was an effort.	1	2	3	4	31/
8. I felt hopeful about the future.	1	2	3	4	32/
9. I thought my life had been a failure.	1	2	3	4	33/
10. I felt fearful.	1	2	3	4	34/
11. My sleep was restless.	1	2	3	4	35/
12. I was happy.	1	2	3	4	36/
13. I talked less than usual.	1	2	3	4	37/
14. I felt lonely.	1	2	3	4	38/
15. People were unfriendly.	1	2	3	4	39/
16. I enjoyed life.	1	2	3	4	40/
17. I had crying spells.	1	2	3	4	41/
18. I felt sad.	1	2	3	4	42/
19. I felt that people dislike me.	1	2	3	4	43/
20. I could not get "going."	1	2	3	4	44/